

A STUDY OF SIXTY-TWO JUVENILE DELINQUENTS KNOWN TO THE  
JUVENILE COURT OF McCRACKEN COUNTY, PADUCAH, KENTUCKY  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Significance of the Study .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Scope and Limitations .....	4
Methods of Securing the Data .....	4
Acknowledgements .....	4
II. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE McCRACKEN COUNTY	
JUVENILE COURT .....	5
The Legal Framework .....	5
Physical Facilities .....	7
Personnel of the Court .....	9
Services Available .....	12
III. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SIXTY-TWO	
JUVENILE DELINQUENTS .....	14
Age and Education .....	14
Work Record .....	16
Leisure-Time Activities .....	17
Physical and Mental Health .....	18
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING	
THE OFFENDERS .....	20
Influence of the Broken Home .....	20
Education of the Parents .....	21
Economic Status of the Family .....	22
Home Ownership and Housing .....	24
V. TYPE AND HANDLING OF OFFENDERS .....	27
Nature of the Offenses .....	27
Action by the Court .....	30
VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	39
APPENDIX .....	41

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Age and Education of Juvenile Offenders Coming to the Attention of the McCracken County Juvenile Court, Paducah, Kentucky, 1944 .....	15
2. Parentage of the Child Offenders .....	21
3. Education of the Child's Parents .....	22
4. Bread-Earning Parent .....	23
5. Circumstances Leading to Court Action .....	28

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Significance of the Study

Early treatment accorded the child offender, was most impersonal and inhuman and in essence, amounted to extreme methods of punishment. But it was justified on the premise that the child was willfully stubborn, rebellious, perverse and in danger of becoming a criminal adult.<sup>1</sup> Characteristics of the child offender were considered the same as those common to the adult criminal. In keeping with this attitude, the child and adult offenders were housed together in the jails.

Early as 1677, cruel treatment of the child offender was practiced in the American Colonies. Pennsylvania imprisoned children with the most degenerate adult criminals. The criminal law imposed a maximum penalty of death upon the child transgressor.

By 1813, the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism of New York had recognized a need for specialized services for juvenile offenders.<sup>2</sup> Separation of the child from adult offenders as a measure against future juvenile transgressions and as "protection of the child from a desire, conscious or

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur E. Fink, The Field of Social Work (New York, 1942), pp. 100-102.

<sup>2</sup>Grace Abbott, The Child and The State (Chicago, 1942), p. 325.



unconscious, to emulate the adult criminal" was carried into effect.<sup>1</sup> In less than a decade following 1813, mere separation of the juvenile and adult offenders in the jails had proved ineffective in decreasing juvenile delinquency.

Search for an effective method of curbing juvenile offenses led to the inception of the Society for the Reformation of Delinquents in 1819.<sup>2</sup> From the efforts of this organization, the New York House of Refuge, America's first reform school, was established in 1825. At first financial support came from private philanthropists, but six years later, financial support was assumed by public sources. Child offenders only were to be received by the House of Refuge and to be provided with such education and employment as would accomplish their reformation and fit them to be useful citizens upon their discharge.

Methods of handling the child and the discipline accorded him lost little of its severity. As late as 1875, antiquated methods of regimentation were used in many of the training and industrial schools for children.<sup>3</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, Chicago had established its Boys' Court, and a more humane attitude toward the child offender was expressed.

Passage of the Juvenile Court Act, in Illinois in 1899,

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<sup>1</sup>Grace Abbott, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur E. Fink, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

gave impetus to the Juvenile Court Movement. These courts were established for purposes of aid in the study of child problems. The Illinois Law required that "...the judge deal with the problems of the erring children as a wise and kind father. As a result, wayward tendencies would be checked and delinquency reduced."

Interest in the delinquent child gained impetus because of a new interest in antisocial behavior as an expression of deep-seated conflicts within the individual. In addition, it was revealed that each child had his own particular needs and characteristics and must be individualized. Training schools and courts handling delinquent children were forced to develop programs which would meet the needs of the antisocial child and help him to become a better adjusted individual.

With the incurring amount of antisocial behavior of children as an aftermath of World War II, the writer became interested in problems of delinquent youth and how these problems were met in Kentucky.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to consider the characteristics, needs and methods of meeting the problems of sixty-two juvenile offenders coming to the attention of the McCracken County Juvenile Court, Paducah, Kentucky and to show lacks and inadequacies in planning for the final disposition of these children.

### Scope and Limitations

This study is confined to sixty-two juvenile delinquents known to the McCracken County Juvenile Court, Paducah, Kentucky from January 1, 1944 to December 31, 1944. This study is limited by the unavailability of court records and insufficient data in these records.

### Methods of Securing the Data

The data for this study was obtained by use of a schedule made by the writer. The information was taken from the case records of sixty-two juvenile delinquents selected at random. A review was made of official public documents, books, articles and publications pertinent to the subject. Interviews were held with the county judge, county probation officer and other persons interested in juvenile problems.

### Acknowledgements

The writer is deeply indebted to the following persons for making this study possible: Honorable Brady M. Stewart, Judge, McCracken County Court; Mr. L. R. Wrenn, Probation Officer, McCracken County Juvenile Court; Mr. J. F. Ridgeway, Attendance Officer, Paducah Negro Public Schools; and Mr. Ernest Wilson, Chief of Building Maintenance, County Court House Building.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE McCRACKEN COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

#### The Legal Framework

In 1915, the Kentucky Legislature passed an enactment providing for the establishment of juvenile courts.<sup>1</sup> The Act was comprehensive and provided that "In any county having therein a city of the third class there is hereby established a juvenile court."<sup>2</sup> The Law states that the juvenile court shall have jurisdiction over cases of all dependent, neglected and delinquent children and furthermore, that the court in the trial and disposition of such cases may be called the Juvenile Session of the County Court.

The legal definition of a delinquent is given as a male child seventeen years of age or under, or, a female child eighteen years of age or under who:

Violates any law of this state or is incorrigible; knowingly associates with thieves or vicious or immoral persons; is growing up in idleness and crime; patronizes any place where intoxicating liquor is sold; knowingly visits a house of ill-repute or knowingly visits a policy shop or place where gambling device or scheme is operated; uses obscene, profane, or indecent language or is guilty of immoral, indecent, lascivious or disorderly

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<sup>1</sup>Sophonisba P. Breckenridge and Helen R. Jeter, A Summary of Juvenile Court Legislation in the United States, Children's Bureau Publication No. 70 (Washington, 1920), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Kentucky Statutes (1944) Revised. Chap., 199, p. 2.

conduct in any public place or about any school house; habitually wanders about any railroad yard or track, or jumps on any moving train or enters any car or engine without lawful authority; is persistently truant from school, or; absents itself from its place of abode without just cause and without the consent of the person having its custody.

The Kentucky Act prescribes the provisions applying to the confinement of a delinquent child as follows:<sup>1</sup>

No child under ten years of age is to be committed to the penitentiary, house of reform, county jail or workhouse. Children between the ages of ten and eighteen years of age if convicted of crime may at the discretion of the trial judge, be committed to the house of reform instead of the penitentiary or county jail. Persons over eighteen convicted of crime punishable by imprisonment shall be committed to the penitentiary, county jail or workhouse.

Unlike some states, proceedings against the delinquent child in Kentucky are begun by petition or complaint filed by any reputable person. A preliminary investigation is to be made by the probation officer before the child is brought in for hearing. The summons is used to secure the attendance of the parent or guardian and the child. A special room is required in which to hear the offender's case. If the offense of the child is of a more serious nature, it is brought before the juvenile session of the county court.

The Act provides that a liberal interpretation of the juvenile court law shall apply in dealing with the child offenders. As a further protection of the child, publication of juvenile offense cases are prohibited by law. The name

of the child offender may not be given in the annual report of the county juvenile court. The public may be excluded from the hearing of the child offender. Evidence against the child may not be used except in subsequent cases under the same law. The child offender is permitted to substitute an oath or his word that he will appear in court in the place of bond.

Moreover, the institution to which the child is committed by the juvenile court is subject to supervision, visitation and control of a board or committee appointed by the juvenile court judge. Furthermore, the juvenile court may require reports from the institution where the child offender is placed. An institution may not discharge a child without the consent of the juvenile court that committed him. The state institutions used for the committment of the delinquent child are the State Reformatories at La Grange, Greendale, Frankfort and the State Penitentiary at Eddyville.

The McCracken County Juvenile Court is financed from public funds. But sometimes the cost of court is assessed the juvenile offender or his parents. The State also contributes financially to its county juvenile courts. In keeping with the juvenile-court procedure, when a fine is used, it is for purposes of discipline of the offender rather than as a penalty.

#### Physical Facilities

The McCracken County Juvenile Court is housed in the

McCracken County Court House Building. The building has a spacious yard which covers an entire city block. Washington Street forms the northern boundary, Sixth Street the eastern, Clark Street the southern and Seventh Street the western boundaries. The building is the administrative center of the county government and is a modern two-story brick structure with steam heat which recently was completed. Office space for county officials is provided in the basement. The sessions of the juvenile court are conducted in the county court room located on the first floor. The court room occupies approximately one-half of the east-side of the building. Adjoining the court room is the office of the county judge. No private room is provided for the county judge. Two stenographers work in the same office with him. This room also serves for purposes of filing data. There is an ample waiting room adjoining the judge's office where individuals sit until the judge is free to talk to them. Little privacy is possible because persons in the waiting room can hear the conversation between the judge and those whom he is seeing in his chambers.

The probation officer's room adjoins the judge's office. Both these officials may visit each other without passing through the waiting room. The probation officer has two desks in his room and a file cabinet where records of the juvenile offenders are kept. There is a telephone in his room. This room is relatively small and only two additional persons may comfortably occupy the room when the probation

officer is present. The juvenile offenders are interviewed here and dispositions are made of minor cases by a probation officer. There are no additional rooms available to accommodate large numbers of children who may be waiting to see the probation worker at the same time.

#### Personnel of the Court

Where juvenile court jurisdiction is bestowed upon certain regular courts, the judge presiding over these courts becomes the juvenile court judge.<sup>1</sup> County judges, in these cases, serve as juvenile judicial officials.

The county judge is elected by popular vote for a term of six years. The number of terms he may serve is dependent only upon public approval and his desire to serve. The salary of the county judge, for conducting the sessions of the juvenile court, is \$100.00 per 15,000 inhabitants or \$300.00 per month in addition to his salary as county judge. Aspirants for the office of county judge must be a citizen of the United States for three years, trained in law, at least thirty years of age, of high moral character, and must have special fitness by training, education and experience to deal with children. His powers and duties are as follows: to preside over the juvenile sessions of the county court, to maintain records of each case coming to trial, to submit an annual report on the juvenile court to the Governor of the

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<sup>1</sup>Breckenridge and Jeter, op. cit., p. 14.



State, to work in conjunction with a board in the administration of the juvenile court law, and to see that a liberal interpretation of the juvenile court law is adhered to by the court. The county judge reserves the right to set aside any decision as to commitment, fine or probation.

The present judge of the McCracken County Court has served more than two consecutive terms of six years each. The last popular election of the county judge resulted in an electoral vote for the present judge which was greater than the vote gained by his opponent. Two facts were revealed in this election, namely, that the community was satisfied with the caliber of service rendered by the present county judge during his subsequent terms of service and that the community was aware that its county judge should be elected for a period sufficient for him to become familiar with the office and with the needs of the children brought before him. Honorable Brady M. Stewart, the present county judge, stated that the McCracken County Juvenile Court adheres to a liberal interpretation of the juvenile court law in dealing with its juvenile offenders and that the goals of the juvenile court are to correct, educate and rehabilitate these children.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Statement by Honorable Brady M. Stewart, Judge, McCracken County Court, Paducah, Kentucky, Personal Interview, September 24, 1947.

In counties having cities of the second class or having a population over 20,000 the chief probation officer is appointed by the judge.<sup>1</sup> The number and salary of these officers are decided by the court on the basis of population. The chief probation officer receives a minimum salary of \$2,400 annually and may have one or more assistants. His first assistant receives \$1,800 annually, and additional assistants, \$1,000 each year. Qualifications for the probation staff are good character, a sense of sympathy with the problems of others and a winning personality. Length of residence in the county and educational accomplishment are not emphasized.

The term of office of the probation staff is dependent upon the discretion of the county court. The powers and duties of the probation officers are as follows: to investigate a case, to be present at hearings and represent the interest of the child, to plan for the child before and after trial and to execute, process and make arrests.

There are two individuals on the probation staff of the McCracken County Juvenile Court, namely, the chief probation officer and his assistant. The present Chief Probation Officer is a personable individual. Although he has not attended college nor taken a course in social work, he has rendered an enviable service to the community as its

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<sup>1</sup>Breckenridge and Jeter, op. cit., p. 15.

probation officer. He is respected as a responsible citizen - a property owner, a taxpayer and a father. One part-time assistant to the probation officer is provided by the court. There are no Negroes employed by the county court to serve on the probationary staff in Paducah, Kentucky.

#### Services Available

Mental and physical examinations, of offenders brought before the McCracken County Juvenile Court, are not required by law. The juvenile court, therefore, has no medical or psychiatric facilities. The County Judge, however, is empowered by law to order that a child be placed in a hospital for medical care or observation. If a child is found to be mentally deficient, the county judge may commit or advise the parent to place the child in a state institution for the mentally defectives. A child that needs ordinary medical services may secure treatment at a city hospital in Paducah. Any commitment that is made upon the order of the county court must be financed out of county funds.

As previously stated, the Juvenile Court Act does not state that each county shall construct, establish and maintain a detention home for use of the county juvenile court. In the absence of a detention home, McCracken County has made plans for the detention of a child such as when in the judgement of the court the offense is minor, the child is permitted to remain in his home with his own parents, relatives or friends until the court has taken action. On the

other hand, when the offense is considered a major one, detention in jail of the juvenile offender is provided under the Kentucky Law.

## CHAPTER III

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SIXTY-TWO JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

Of the sixty-two cases studied, twenty-eight juvenile offenders were recidivists or had previous court records. Forty-one of the juvenile delinquents were boys, and the remaining twenty-one offenders were girls. Thirteen could not be classed as "true" delinquents,<sup>1</sup> and twelve of these youth were brought to the court's attention because of parental neglect or non-support. The other case was one of disputed custody of the child by its parents. There were forty-nine cases that could be classed as "true" delinquents. A knowledge of the background of the offenders and their environment is paramount to an understanding of them.

#### Age and Education

Table 1 shows the age and education of the sixty-two juvenile offenders considered in this study. Thirty-one of them or 50 per cent were between the ages of twelve and fourteen years; and twelve youths or 19 per cent, between nine and eleven years and fifteen and eighteen years respectively. One child offender was eight years of age while six children were under five years of age. Moreover, eleven children or 17 per cent of the offenders were not included in Table 1 as

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<sup>1</sup> A child whose behavior is so antisocial that he is adjudged delinquent by the court.

this group were not enrolled in school.

TABLE 1

AGE AND EDUCATION OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS COMING  
TO THE ATTENTION OF THE McCRACKEN COUNTY  
JUVENILE COURT, PADUCAH, KENTUCKY, 1944

Age Groups	School Grades Completed														GNI	USA
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
1-8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
9-11	1	1	2	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
12-14	-	-	-	1	3	2	4	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	12	-
15-18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Total	1	1	2	3	5	2	4	5	2	1	-	-	-	-	19	6
GNI - Grade not indicated																
USA - Under school age																

Significantly, forty-three child offenders or 69 per cent of all the cases studied were between the ages of nine and fourteen years. This fact is in agreement with other studies made on delinquency that juvenile delinquents are usually to be found among the early adolescent age group. Although one would expect to find the greatest number of children in school between the ages of nine and fourteen years, the grade classification of nineteen children or 30.6 per cent of all of them was not indicated in their case records.

While Table 1 gives the retarded and accelerated child in grade as far as chronological age, there exists no

relationship between mental age and grade placement.

The largest number of offenders or five of the group were in the eighth grade; four, in the seventh, and three, in the fifth grade. Two children each were in the third, fourth, sixth and ninth grades respectively. The remaining children were scattered by units of one throughout elementary and high school. Of the thirteen Negro delinquents in this study twelve had attended school in the Paducah School System. Schools attended were Garfield and Lincoln Elementary and Lincoln High. The remaining child had attended a rural school in McCracken County.

Studies of large groups of juvenile delinquents reveal that many boys withdraw from school because of economic necessity or a need to help supplement the family's meager resources. Other significant reasons, however, were retardation in school work and a desire to escape the discipline of school life.<sup>1</sup>

#### Work Records

It could not be ascertained in this study the number of juvenile offenders who withdrew from school because of economic need. But twenty-four children out of the sixty-two cases studied had work records. The youngest child with an employment record was nine years of age. He delivered a

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, The Delinquent Grown-Up (New York, 1940), pp. 10-11.

daily newspaper. The oldest child who worked was a girl seventeen years of age. She was employed at a city laundry as a garment presser. Five girls had work records. Of the four girls remaining, three were in domestic services with private families and the other, a dishwasher at a cafe.

It has been stated that jobs keep youth in the streets. Hence the children working has been criticized on the premise that the child is thrown into contact with many social evils. In this study it was revealed that the juvenile offenders had held such jobs as newspaper deliverers, general delivery boys at stores, messengers and caddies to golfers. There were twelve boys who did caddy services at the gold courses. One offender earned his spending money by subterfuge, namely, by renting car-lot space to motorist without the consent of the property owner.

#### Leisure-Time Activities

Another factor important in understanding delinquents is their recreational pursuits. The gregarious nature of boys tend to drive them into the uncontrolled life of the streets where they make early contacts with undesirable and dangerous companions. These associations take their toll in antisocial attitudes and petty forms of misconduct that lead to more serious offenses.<sup>1</sup> Fifty of the sixty-two delinquents studied had indulged in harmful or unwholesome recreation

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<sup>1</sup>Glueck and Glueck, op. cit.



such as roving at night, frequenting beer parlors and gambling rooms, loitering on the streets, disturbing the peace by boisterous behavior, engaging in various sex practices, bathing in the children's wading pool after dark, breaking window-panes and damaging and defacing private property.

### Physical and Mental Health

Dr. Adolph Meyer,<sup>1</sup> a psychiatrist, views man as a unit to be studied as much from the physical and organic point of view as from the purely psychological. He is cognizant of the fact that mentally ill-health in adults oftentime had its origin in childhood insecurities. Moreover, it is consistently known that the delinquent who has emotional problems frequently has poor physical health.

The mental health of the delinquent requires careful treatment because this symptomatic behavior expressed in delinquent acts show many neurotic characteristics. The following case of Hubert, age 10, illustrates this point.

### Case 5

Hubert was resentful of his mother who was mentally sick. His father showed an inability to manage the family, yet, he was interested in Hubert's welfare despite the fact that he and his wife were living under strained marital relationships.

Hubert was over-indulged by the father. He spent all of his time in the movies,--stayed away from

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas A. C. Rennie, "Mental Hygiene" Social Work Year Book (New York, 1945), p. 319.

home and was a truant from school. He would not play games as normal children but selected his playmates and became the hero of staged-holdups. He was not a member of any organized group. He had threatened to kill his mother and other members of the family.

Hubert was stubborn, had a violent temper, was seemingly resentful of not being allowed to have friends at home, of not receiving any attention from the family, and of his mother's friends.

In another instance, Addie, a nine-year old girl in the first grade at school was definitely ill mentally.

Of the sixty-two cases studied, fourteen were found to be in poor health. Twelve of these were neglected children suffering from malnutrition, poor eye-sight, bad teeth, infected tonsils and unhealthy skin. One of these, a child two years of age, was sent to the city hospital for treatment because of physical neglect by parents. The two remaining delinquents had venereal infections and were under enforced treatment at the city health center.

It seems evident that of the sixty-two children studied most of them were in their most formative stage of development, that is, nine through fourteen years of age. It would be expected that most of these children would either be in grammar school or in high school, but only about one-third of them were in school.

The recreational pursuits of the children studied were not of an organized nature and showed little supervisory interest on the part of adults. Physical and mental defects were also most evident among these juvenile offenders.

## CHAPTER IV

### ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE OFFENDERS

It has long been recognized by individuals who have studied the background of juvenile offenses that an unwholesome home situation is consistently present wherever juvenile offenses exist.<sup>1</sup> Divorce, separation, death of parents and desertion of the child by parents are factors in the home which afford fertile soil for the development of insecure feelings and problems of behavior on the part of the child.

#### Influence of the Broken Home

Out of the sixty-two juvenile youths thirty instances or 48 per cent of broken homes were found. Death was the reason for the broken home in nine families or 14 per cent of the sixty-two cases studied; desertion in 10 homes or 16 per cent; separation in seven cases or 11 per cent; and divorce in four instances or 6 per cent.

Table 2 shows that 43 per cent of the sixty-two children brought to the attention of the McCracken County Juvenile Court had a natural parent person in the home. 36 per cent of the children had only a mother in the home; and 8 per cent had only a father. Of the remaining children, about 1 per cent each lived in the home with either grandparents,

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, One-Thousand Juvenile Delinquents (Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 17.

grandmother, aunt, uncle or cousin who served as the parental substitute. In 8 per cent of the sixty-two cases studied, the parent or parental substitute with whom the child lived at the time of his offense was unknown.

TABLE 2  
PARENTAGE OF THE CHILD OFFENDERS

Family head with whom the child resided	
Mother and father .....	27
Mother only .....	19
Father only .....	5
Grandmother .....	1
Grandparents .....	2
Aunt .....	1
Uncle .....	1
Cousin .....	1
Interested persons .....	1
Unknown .....	4
Total	62

#### Education of the Parents

The extent to which parental education influenced the sixty-two juvenile offenders in this study is not known. However, the education of the parent as a cultural factor in the background of the child offenders who came to the attention of the juvenile court in McCracken County should not be minimized.

Table 3, shows that none of the parents or parental substitutes were illiterate. Of the children studied 61.2 per cent of them had parents who had completed elementary

school grades, three through six. About one-fourth of the children had parents who had completed school grades seven through nine; and approximately 10 per cent had parents who had completed school grades ten through twelve. Less than 5 per cent of the parents had completed college courses. In these cases the parents had completed two-years of college.

TABLE 3  
EDUCATION OF THE CHILD'S PARENTS

Grades Completed	
Illiterates .....	0
3rd Grade .....	2
4th .....	10
5th .....	15
6th .....	11
7th .....	3
8th .....	5
9th .....	8
10th .....	2
11th .....	2
12th .....	2
Total	62

#### Economic Status of the Family

Although educational achievement exerts great influence on individual earning capacity, economic factors of supply and demand exert controlling influence on family income in the community. Unemployment in McCracken County during the year 1944 was at a minimum as World War II production demands required the employment of workers in large numbers. These

workers were placed in jobs of various classification. Out of the sixty-two juvenile delinquents studied fifty-five had parents or parental substitutes who worked on jobs of various classification. 23 per cent of the children had parents who worked as skilled laborers; 35 per cent worked as semi-skilled individuals; 8.06 per cent were unskilled or laborers; 6.4 per cent were white collar workers; 12.9 per cent worked as domestic servants; 4.8 per cent were agricultural workers; and 3.2 per cent engaged in the illegal sale of liquor. 5 per cent of the children had parents who were not employed regularly. This same percentage of children had parental substitutes whose sole income was Old Age Assistance Grants.

Although there was a wide differential in the salaries or wages paid the various classified laboring groups, the unskilled workers had received an appreciable increase in wages, that is, from 65¢ to 75¢ per hour.

TABLE 4  
BREAD-EARNING PARENT

Job Classification	Range of Monthly Income			
	\$50-\$99	\$100-\$199	\$200-\$249	\$250-\$300
Professional .....				2.....
Skilled Labor .....				10.....
Unskilled Labor .....	7.....	9.....	27.....	
Bootlegger .....				2.....
Old Age Assistance ...	2.....			

Table 4 shows the job classification and range of monthly income of the parents of the children studied.

#### Home Ownership and Housing

Valuable criteria that may be used in evaluating the stability of families in the community are the economics of the community or availability of employment and the proportion of home ownership.<sup>1</sup>

Home ownership among the families covered in this study was generally common to all the families irrespective of job classification. Increased income during the year 1944 had made it possible for families in the unskilled labor group to buy homes as well as workers in the higher income bracket. Over one-half of the delinquent children had parents or parental substitutes who owned their homes. 31 per cent of the children lived with parents who rented their homes from civilian landlords. Approximately 5 per cent lived in the Federal Housing Project and paid rent to the Local Housing Authority. Of the remaining children who represented less than 2 per cent it was not known if they lived in houses that were rented or owned by their parents.

Irrespective of academic accomplishment, the man-in-the-streets recognizes the practicality of home ownership. Of less recognition by him are the standards of a wholesome

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<sup>1</sup>Mildred L. Hartsough, "Housing and Delinquency" Research Bulletin No. 1. (Washington, 1936), pp. 20-29.

home. The Federal Housing Administration has prescribed standards of the wholesome home as follows:<sup>1</sup>

A home is wholesome if there is not more than two persons per room - two children under 10 years of age are counted as one person - and light, ventilation and cleanliness are adequate.

Modern convenience that go into making a wholesome home are furnace heat, electricity, hot and cold running water, private water closets and both tub and shower bath.

This study revealed that occupational classification did not serve as sole determinants in high standard, minimum standard or below standard housing among the parents of the children because of increased wages earned by the laboring group.

Of the sixty-two juvenile delinquents studied only 22.5 per cent of them lived in houses that measured up to wholesome standards as prescribed by the Federal Housing Administration. Almost one-third of the children lived in houses that represented minimum standards of wholesomeness. In this type house two children irrespective of age occupied the same room. While this group maintained standards of cleanliness in their homes and had the use of electricity, their houses were equipped only with stove type heating and cold running water. There were private water closets but no bathroom facilities.

Living in homes of below minimum standards of wholesomeness were almost one-half of the offenders. Their homes were more or less in blighted areas and suffered from disrepair. Cleanliness in these homes was not maintained. In many cases,



four or more persons occupied the same room. Stove heat was used and lack of repair of the building made the heating system inadequate in colder weather. In some cases, electricity was provided for lighting, but water had to be secured from the faucet in the yard. In some cases, water-closets were located on the rear porches but the poor plumbing system made these toilets unsanitary. The old-fashioned privvy in backyards were used.

The juvenile delinquents studied mainly come from broken homes. In the home situations these children were deprived of normal emotional development that grows out of wholesome parent-child relationship.

Environmental inadequacies, in the form of recreation, suitable housing and education played a part in producing social maladjustments.

## CHAPTER V

### TYPE AND HANDLING OF OFFENSES

The proportion of juvenile delinquents coming to the juvenile court through parents, relatives and interested individuals indicate community confidence in the court as well as an awareness of the juvenile delinquency problem.<sup>1</sup>

Referrals in 32.2 per cent of all cases studied came from these sources. The alertness of public officials to the juvenile problems are indicated in the following referrals; police 30.6 per cent; school attendance officers 16.1 per cent; County Child Welfare Agency 4.5 per cent; school principals and teachers 6.2 per cent.

#### Nature of the Offenses

Although the juvenile court is not to be depended upon for help by parents and school in minor problems of discipline, many cases of developing delinquency might well be referred to the court for constructive action before the police find it necessary to report or arrest the child.<sup>2</sup>

Table 5 shows the nature of the juvenile transgressions. These offenses were committed against persons, property and statutes. Pressures in the environment upon these children

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<sup>1</sup>Breckenridge and Jeter, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

were terrific. Their acts or offenses tell a mute story of a familial soil which produced insecure, deprived and rebellious children whose behavior was neurotic and whose attitudes were antisocial. Their behavior comprise acts that show lack of respect of personal property and person of others, rebellion and defiance of authority and fear and insecurity. Unable to solve their personal problems or to adjust to situations, these children compensated and took flight into neurotic and antisocial behavior.

TABLE 5  
CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO COURT ACTION

Type Offenses	Boys	- Girls	Total 62
Victims of non-support .....	8	3	12
Stealing .....	9	2	11
Damaging and Defacing Property .....	11	-	11
Fighting .....	1	6	7
Truancy from school .....	3	1	4
Incorrigibility .....	2	-	2
House breaking .....	2	-	2
Contempt of court order .....	-	2	2
Sex Delinquency .....	1	1	2
Malicious cutting .....	-	1	1
Purse snatching .....	1	-	1
Subterfuge in gaining money .....	1	-	1
Hitchhiking on highway .....	1	-	1
Roving at night .....	1	-	1
Chasing neighbor's live stock .....	1	-	1
Refusal to attend school .....	1	-	1
Running away from home .....	1	-	1
Victims of disputed custody .....	-	1	1
Total	44	18	62

The most prevalent offense committed by these children

was stealing which represented 17.9 per cent of all the cases in this study. Articles stolen were sums of money, coal, food, bicycles, bottles, a lock from a school building and a car. The same percentage or 17.9 per cent was found among children who damaged and defaced property. These children played on roof-tops causing damage to the roofing, broke windows in privately owned buildings, and used pocket knives to deface these structures.

Aggressiveness was expressed in fighting and 11.2 per cent of the children were in this group. Fighting was carried on with siblings, schoolmates and acquaintances. inability to adjust was seen in truancy from school and constituted 6.4 per cent of the cases. Acts that showed defiance of authority, rebellion, insecurity occurred in negligible percentages.

Children who were victims of non-support from parents led in the number of cases that were brought to the court's attention. In this group were 19.3 per cent of the sixty-two cases studied. Physical neglect was common among these children, and one child had to be committed to the city hospital for treatment for reasons of malnutrition and exposure. Children who were victims of disputed custody appeared before the court in negligible numbers. One child was in this group and was given to the father to rear since the mother had proved unable to furnish a wholesome environment.

### Action by the Court

The orders made by the court in the various classes of cases are affected by law, by the facilities available to the court, and by the proportion of cases adjusted without formal court action.<sup>1</sup> The usual disposition in delinquency cases are as follows: dismissal; order for restitution or reparation; probation; commitment to an agency, public or private; commitment to an institution, state, county, city or private. Out of the sixty-two juvenile cases studied, the following dispositions were made by the McCracken County Juvenile Court, namely, dismissal of the child's case; an order for restitution of stolen goods; placement on probation or in foster home, and commitment to charitable, correctional or penal institutions.

The following case illustrates a typical problem handled by the McCracken County Juvenile Court and the factors which influenced the disposition of the case by the court.

### Case 8

Helen, a Negro girl age 15, was apprehended by the police with stolen goods in her possession. She had taken these articles from the 10¢ store. The police turned her over to the McCracken County Juvenile Court.

Helen was questioned in the County Probation Officer's room in the presence of her father, a Negro school attendance officer of the city and the writer. The probation officer attempted to

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<sup>1</sup>Breckenridge and Jeter, op. cit., p. 48.

determine if Helen was a member of a group of Negro girls who made it a practice of shoplifting. Helen admitted acquaintance with these girls but denied any organized connection with them in crime. The officer tried to create fear within Helen by re-emphasizing the severe penalty imposed by law for stealing. Helen showed no fear and seemed complacent about her act. The probation officer asked the attendance officer to appeal to the girl in the interest of good citizenship. But Helen's attitude showed no visible change.

Helen's case was handled by the county probation officer as her actions were not considered serious enough to come before the juvenile court. As this was Helen's first offense and she promised to amend her way, the officer told her she would not be prosecuted. She was ordered to carry the stolen goods back to the stores from which she took them and instructed to report to the office of the county probation officer weekly for three months to give an account of her conduct in the community.

Similarly, Richard age 10, required careful consideration and indicated a need for substitute parental care.

#### Case 10

Richard, age 10, was a frequent truant from school. His parents were separated, and he lived with his mother who had a record of prostitution. Following the separation of his parents, Richard lived with his father. As he did not adjust well, his father took court action to have Richard placed in a correctional institution. The mother objected to this plan and was granted custody of the boy by the court. Richard was especially cruel to smaller children and liked to hurt them. He was retarded in school, in the third grade and could not read nor write. He was an exhibitionist and showed perverted sexual tendencies. Richard would answer only when directly spoken to, in one word, such as yes or no. Psychologic examinations suggested that Richard was very low mentally and would not achieve beyond a second grade level in school work.

The unwholesome nature of Richard's home situation was considered in the court's recommendation. A foster home placement was discounted as Richard had not adjusted in the home of his parents. It was recommended that Richard be institutionalized in a Home for Feebleminded Children.

Madeline, age 17, a recidivist, was brought into court as a child who defied parental authority.

#### Case 14

Madeline, was a second child of a family of seven children. Madeline and her twin sister stayed in the home of their grandmother to keep her company after the grandfather died.

The grandmother was too lenient with the children. She permitted them to go unchaperoned to parties and oftentime did not know where they were. The children's parents did not know of this leniency at first, but when they did, they did not approve.

Madeline had trouble in school and could not adjust well. She wanted to take music, but family finance would not allow it. She began to visit a girl friend who gave parties in the absence of an only parent her father. When Madeline's parents called for her at her girl friend's home, Madeline ran out the back door and stayed away from home all night. She was brought into court on two occasions. The first offense was stealing coal. She was probated to her parents by the court in this instance, and required to report to the probation officer weekly for three months. The second offense for which Madeline was referred to the court was disorderly conduct. She had started an argument with a girl acquaintance in a cafe.

Further study by the probation staff found the home situation of Madeline to be most unwholesome. The father was too demanding of the entire family and did not give encouragement to any of the children. His severe manner had made all of the children dislike their home. The court felt that Madeline was not a bad girl but rather a child in need of guidance and training, which she could not obtain at home. It was

recommended that the girl be committed to an institution for education and training.

Thomas, age 12, was a child who had maintained a good school record both in class-work and deportment. His familial situation had contributed to the offense for which the boy was brought to the juvenile court.

#### Case 12

Thomas, age 12, was in the seventh grade at school. His parents made and sold whiskey in the home.

Thomas' mother and father lived under strained marital difficulties and she was considered a reputed prostitute. She would have her husband arrested for selling whiskey, and while he was in jail, she sold liquor and kept the profits. It was reported that Thomas' mother got her customers drunk and robbed them. Her home was described as being frequented by drunken men who cursed and fought while there.

Following desertion by his mother Thomas had been in a friendly home for four years. He had been spoiled by his foster mother and engaged in frequent hitchhiking.

The court recommended that Richard be committed to a children's home for supervision and education. This decision was influenced by several facts: although Richard did not live with his parents he desired to be with them. He was aware of their marital difficulties and also of the unwholesome home atmosphere they created. The child had maintained good grades in school, but it was thought best to remove him from any negative influences his parents might exert upon him and to place him in an institution where his talents might be explored and his abilities given an opportunity to develop.

James, age 13, suffered very much from environmental pressures, had deep-seated resentments and was defiant of



authority. His mother was unable to discipline him and contributed to his defiant attitude. In dealing with him it is not too much to predict that James will return to society a hardened criminal after contact with adults who have no regard for law and order.

### Case 3

James, Negro boy, lived with his mother a widow. She worked outside the home and saw little of James for twenty-four hours. The boy roved at night and returned home very late. The mother was not able to supervise or discipline him. He expected his mother to supply him with spending money and became angry when he was refused.

James drank whiskey and came home in an intoxicated condition. At such times, he was very disagreeable and could not be handled. He had been taken to the court for stealing and had spent a term in jail.

James had created a problem at school as he refused to attend classes although on the school grounds. He was referred to the juvenile court because he stole some bottles from a neighborhood cafe. While being detained in jail awaiting trial he broke several windows in the jail.

The court recommended that James be committed to the State Penitentiary on an indefinite sentence to be paroled when his conduct warranted it or when the court requested his release. This decision was based upon the fact that James had become a menace to society, was defiant of authority, and did not improve his antisocial behavior. It was further felt by the court that the boy's attitude was so deep-seated that only severe discipline as administered at the state penitentiary would help him.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The failure of county governments to construct and maintain detention homes, although the Kentucky Law does not require them to do so, is unfortunate. The child who is thrown into jail is stigmatized. There he comes into contact with hardened adult criminals with whom he may consciously or unconsciously identify and emulate. Requirement by law that those counties construct and maintain detention homes could prove an economical asset through a reduced crime rate as crime is one of the nation's greatest expense.

The Kentucky Statutes show that the legislators were sensitive to the need of legal protection for the child offender; that they were aware of the terrific environmental pressures that the child is exposed to; and that the child offender is a victim of circumstance rather than "bad." The Statutes provide that a liberal interpretation of the Juvenile Court Law shall be adhered to in dealing with the child who has transgressed: In keeping with the spirit of legal protection for the child, the following Acts need clarification so that the best interest of the child who comes into conflict with the Statutes will be further insured: "An institution may not discharge a child without the consent of the juvenile court that committed him." It should be the function of the court to evaluate whether the home and community offer a wholesome environment for the child to be

returned to from the correctional institution. On the other hand, some staff member who had intimate association with the child would know if he had made adequate adjustment in the institution or had met its requirements for discharge. A sharing-role of the court and institution in evaluating discharge of the child is suggested as a method that will help the child make a more adequate adjustment to his environment. Where discharge from an institution is delayed pending sanction of the court that committed the child the plans of rehabilitation could easily be thwarted. Delay could easily develop insecure feelings, resentment and defiance within the child who had worked to become eligible for discharge. Where either the court or institution have sole authority to put into effect discharge of the child or delay it, politics could easily enter into the picture and the child's sentence become indefinite disregarding entirely treatment goals.

Of the sixty-two children in this study nearly one-half were recidivist or had previous court records. This is alarming and raises a question as to methods used by the court in handling offenders. It is not the writer's purpose to minimize the problems confronting the court in making adequate disposition of cases nor to suggest that integrity did not govern in each decision made by the court. It is suggested that the McCracken County Juvenile Court stands in need of increased personnel with special training in working with juvenile delinquents to study the needs of these children who are recidivist and to make plans for them on the

basis of findings. This study shows terrific pressures in the environment of these children. An evaluation of these pressures as they affect the child would have to be made before intelligent plans could be made by the court as to treatment of the offenders.

The ages of these children were significant, that is, the nine year old through fourteen showed a greater number of offenses than any other age group studied. As these are the most formative years of the child's life recreation of an organized nature or proper supervision and guidance in activity programs would lay a firm basis for healthful social adjustment of the child. There was a lack of supervisory interest on the part of adults in these activities of the children. There seemed also a lack of insight by adults into the values of organized and supervised children activities.

This study further shows that the broken home situation can contribute to emotional insecurity in the child. Each child needs two parents in the home for purposes of guidance, companionship and love. The greatest service parents can render the child is to help him grow up normally. The parent-child relationships in this study were not of a wholesome nature. Deprivations were reflected in the behavior of eleven children. Aggressions were expressed by equally as many. Defiance of authority was seen in possibly eight cases. Fear and insecurity was expressed by the child who continually fled from his home. Physical neglect of children growing out of non-support by parents led the list of problems coming

before the juvenile court. In conclusion, it would represent a progressive attack upon juvenile delinquency if the Federal and State Governments would make grants to County Governments for purposes of building detention homes for children; for erecting buildings with an ample court room, office space and other building facilities; for the hiring of an adequate staff of workers especially trained in working with juvenile delinquents. These are initial steps that will lead to better understanding of the child by the court. Only when the child is more fully understood and plans of treatment made on the basis of this understanding can there be hope of accomplishing a decrease in juvenile offenses.

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## APPENDIX



# SCHEDULE

Clinic # \_\_\_\_\_ Race \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Case # \_\_\_\_\_  
Child's background  
( ) Parents: Present age: F \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ Age at marriage: F \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_  
Education: F \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: F \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_  
Religion: \_\_\_\_\_ Economic Status: G \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ P \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact with social agencies: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Substitute Parents  
Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
Physical conditions of home: Wholesome \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Unwholesome \_\_\_\_\_  
Neighborhood: Favorable \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Unfavorable \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship between: Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
" substitute \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship of parents or substitute:  
Father and son: W \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ Unw \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother and son: W \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ Unw \_\_\_\_\_  
Male substitute and offenders: W \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ Unw \_\_\_\_\_  
Female substitute and offender: W \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ Unw \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline: Sound \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Unsound \_\_\_\_\_  
Status of marriage:  
One deserted \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Living apart \_\_\_\_\_ Never married \_\_\_\_\_  
Widowed and remarried \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed and never remarried \_\_\_\_\_  
Broken home:  
Death of one or both parents \_\_\_\_\_ One or both substitutes \_\_\_\_\_  
Desertion, separation, or divorce of parents \_\_\_\_\_ Or substitute \_\_\_\_\_  
Prolonged absence of one or both parents because of illness or imprisonment \_\_\_\_\_ Or substitute \_\_\_\_\_  
Criminality of one or both parents \_\_\_\_\_ Or substitute \_\_\_\_\_  
Incompatibility of parents (marked) \_\_\_\_\_ Or substitute \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline poor by both parents \_\_\_\_\_ Or substitute \_\_\_\_\_  
Child welfare agencies had to intervene because of bad conditions \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother working out (or substitute) and no substitute in Home \_\_\_\_\_  
No broken home or poor supervision \_\_\_\_\_  
Age at which broken home occurred \_\_\_\_\_  
With whom delinquent was residing at the time of offense \_\_\_\_\_  
How long lived there \_\_\_\_\_ siblings \_\_\_\_\_  
Mental condition: \_\_\_\_\_  
Members of family \_\_\_\_\_  
Members of substitute's family \_\_\_\_\_

Clinic # \_\_\_\_\_  
 The Child: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ Legitimacy \_\_\_\_\_ Position in family \_\_\_\_\_  
 School \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_ School retardation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reason for withdrawal from school \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation of Juvenile \_\_\_\_\_ Nature of: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Regularity of employment \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of unusual environmental experiences:

Run away from home \_\_\_\_\_ Lived for time with relatives \_\_\_\_\_  
 Stay out overnight \_\_\_\_\_ Had been in a foster home \_\_\_\_\_  
 Excessive moving about \_\_\_\_\_

Use of leisure time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Misbehavior before arrest: Run away \_\_\_\_\_ Lying \_\_\_\_\_ Sex  
 delinquency \_\_\_\_\_ Truancy \_\_\_\_\_ Stealing \_\_\_\_\_ Others \_\_\_\_\_

Age at first known misbehavior \_\_\_\_\_ Length of time  
 between first misbehavior and arrest \_\_\_\_\_ Early arrest of  
 offender \_\_\_\_\_  
 Disposition of prior arrest \_\_\_\_\_  
 Offense at time of referral \_\_\_\_\_

Physical condition \_\_\_\_\_

Mental condition \_\_\_\_\_ IQ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clinic examination \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_ By whom \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations:

Home under probationary oversight \_\_\_\_\_  
 Foster Home \_\_\_\_\_  
 Non-penal institution \_\_\_\_\_  
 Penal institution \_\_\_\_\_  
 Correctional institution \_\_\_\_\_